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NEWS

March 2007

Meth Use Linked to Heart Disease

A new University of Hawai'i medical study suggests a link between methamphetamine use and cardiomyopathy, a disease of the heart muscle. Use of the highly addictive stimulant, also known as crystal meth, batu and ice, killed 52 people in the Islands last year and brought notoriety to the state as one of the top methamphetamine trouble spots in the United States.

Dr. Khung-Keong Yeo, one of the researchers involved in the study, said the results were no surprise, as there is plenty of anecdotal evidence of how the illegal drug can ravage the body and cause behavior and psychiatric changes. "We just wanted to prove it, otherwise people will continue to pretend it's not a problem," he said. "This is a drug used by lots of people because it is so easily available and so cheap. It's very scary. I hope that people will recognize it as a problem and not use it."

Yeo is formerly of the UH John A. Burns School of Medicine but now works at the University of California-Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. He and his colleagues reviewed the charts of 107 Hawai'i patients age 45 and younger, who were discharged from a medical center between January 2001 and June 2004 with a diagnosis of cardiomyopathy or heart failure. They were compared with a control group of 114 patients similar in age and other characteristics who did not have heart trouble.

The study revealed a high prevalence of methamphetamine use within the first group, and that the risk of cardiomyopathy was 3.7 times higher for meth users. Patients with the condition have enlarged or abnormally thick heart muscles. As the disease progresses, the heart grows weaker and is less able to pump blood through the body. This can lead to heart failure and other life-threatening ailments. Yeo said this kind of cardiac damage is unusual in young people. "It's possible to get heart failure in young patients, but it's usually due to viruses or genetics. Certainly cocaine can cause it, but by and large, heart failure is a disease of older patients," he said. Researchers can't say for sure how methamphetamine affects the heart, but "this evidence is the best you're going to get," short of human experimentation, Yeo said.

The drug likely damages the heart by direct toxicity, he said, or indirectly by increasing the heart rate and blood pressure and causing heart muscle spasms that may impair the flow of blood. Other UH researchers involved in the study include Hiroki Ito, Jimmy Efird, Kevin Tay, Todd Seto, Kavitha

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Alimineti, Chieko Kimata and Irwin Schatz. The study appears in the February issue of the American Journal of Medicine (as reported in the [Honolulu Advertiser](#) on February 18, 2007).

Hard Truths Part of Meth Summit

Through the eyes of a clueless adult, the crowd of more than 600 teenagers corralled into rows of chairs inside the Everett Events Center conference room looked fairly nondescript.

Sure, some kids seemed relatively innocent — like the wide-eyed, preadolescent suburban kids who giggled nervously at the notion of smoking marijuana — while others projected a more worldly, been-there-done-that vibe.

But through the unspoken language of teens — the baggy versus skin-tight jeans, pierced or unadorned skin, Converse or Vans footwear, T-shirts picked up at Abercrombie or Zumiez — their differences were clear to one another.

As the hours passed, however, teens from every clique fell prey to the ultimate equalizer. White-faced zombies, with black-rimmed lips, smoke-smudged and hollow eyes, and hooded black capes, began to appear in their midst. Some were in pairs, some alone, but all represented teens killed by drugs and alcohol. "There's going to be a lot of people by the end of this who are like 'dead' because it shows how bad it is," said Skyler Tetreau, 13, as her ghoulish makeup was applied by a teen volunteer at last week's Washington State Youth Meth Summit. This was Tetreau's third visit to the annual, youth-organized event, which started in 2001. As a youth peer counselor at Lakewood Middle School, she likes to know what she's talking about whenever kids bring her their problems. "I have friends who smoke marijuana — they ask me if I want to smoke pot. I tell them all the stuff I learned here, and they don't listen," Tetreau said. "I'm never, ever using drugs. Ever."

Across the room sat a pair of 15-year-old girls, soaking in the day's offerings: a cautionary tale from a busted pot dealer, tear-choked testimonials from former methamphetamine addicts and their moms, medical insights into how drugs affect the brain.

One of the ninth-graders, who is in drug counseling at school, seemed spooked by one of the testimonials. She had tried meth twice, she said. "I was going down that road. It's like everything he was talking about was happening to me," she said. "I'm not ever doing it again. A lot of my friends are smoking meth, and they're turning out bad. I don't want to turn out like that."

Her companion said she's trying to cut back on her drug use, too. "I've smoked pot, and I drink, and I've done Ecstasy," she said, but lately she's sticking with drinking and cigarettes. "I don't think I'll ever try meth," she said. "I don't want to spend time in Denney [Youth Center] or rehab."

No statistics exist for teen drug use in Snohomish County, said Sheriff's Detective David Chitwood, who staffed an informational table on behalf of the Snohomish Regional Drug Task Force. A report based upon surveys of Denney inmates is in progress, he said, but that won't reflect trends within the more mainstream

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teen population. "The typical kids, you just have to talk to them — say, Hey, what's everybody doing?" he said. "I'm hearing kids are using marijuana, alcohol, smoking cigarettes and OxyContin, a painkiller. They cut them in fours and smoke them."

This was the first time summit organizers had opened the event to schools beyond Snohomish County. Buses delivered teens from a dozen counties, including schools on the Olympic Peninsula and east of the Cascades. Snohomish County Sheriff Rick Bart said the core group of youth leaders responsible for past summits wants to pass the project on to a new generation of students. "We wanted to get kids from around the state because we want to pass the torch. We want somebody else to take this up," he said. "Hopefully, we sparked some interest in some of those kids."

Each school used its own criteria to select participants, creating an eclectic cross-section of teens. "We were asked, 'Do you want the school leaders?' We said, 'Absolutely not.' We don't care what their role is in school," said County Clerk Pam Daniels, whose office runs the county courts. "Drugs impact everyone."

The Youth Meth Action Team: This Snohomish County-based group, which has organized the summit since 2001, hopes other youth groups will step forward to either sponsor next year's state summit or create smaller drug-awareness events tailored to their schools or communities. Grants ranging from \$250 to \$1,000 are available. Information: Snohomish County Sheriff Rick Bart at 425-388-3026 or volunteer organizer Beth Kerwin at 425-212-2007 (as reported in the [Seattle Times](#) on February 21, 2007).

Fewer Meth Labs Seen in Washington State, But Drug Flows in From Elsewhere

Tougher laws and aggressive enforcement seem to have curbed the number of methamphetamine labs around the state, but the drug continues to flow into Washington from other areas, police say. "There is still plenty of meth out there," King County sheriff's Sgt. John Urquhart said. "It's just the source is different."

Still, some authorities say they're glad to see fewer of the toxic drug labs that are so difficult to clean up. Figures from 2006 confirm a five-year trend of declining meth labs and related dump sites across the state. Ecology Department cleanup teams handled 390 such sites in 2006, down from 806 in 2005. Authorities say a law restricting the sale of over-the-counter medicines used to make meth has been a major factor in the declining number of labs. The law, which took effect in 2006, requires retailers to put cold medicines containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine behind the counter. People under 18 are not allowed to buy them, and stores must keep a log of customers who do buy them.

Police also say meth-related crimes are shifting into new areas. Identity theft and mail theft are becoming a problem, along with the theft of metals, particularly copper wire stolen from utility poles and construction sites. In response, the King County Sheriff's Office is scaling back its 18-person lab response team and beefing up its fraud investigations unit (as reported by the [Seattle Post Intelligencer](#) on February 20, 2007).

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State Officials Show off 'Drugs Hurt Kids' Campaign

A state campaign called "Drugs Hurt Kids" was launched Monday to encourage Iowans to help protect children living in drug-endangered homes. The multimedia campaign provides online tools and public service announcements, which could begin running on radio and television and in newspapers as soon as this week. Its message: "The Wounds May Be Invisible, But The Danger Is Real."

The campaign is meant to inspire Iowans to recognize the signs and report whether children are subject to abuse or neglect because a parent or guardian uses, makes or deals drugs. "Unfortunately, the most vulnerable and oftentimes forgotten victims of these acts are children," said Lt. Gov. Patty Judge, who helped announce the campaign at a news conference at Blank Children's Hospital in downtown Des Moines.

Judge said 128 child abuse cases were reported in 2005 that were the result of manufacturing methamphetamine in the presence of a minor. Although there has been a 57 percent decrease in meth-manufacturing related child abuse cases, "there are still too many Iowa children being exposed to toxic chemicals and gases," Judge said.

Over the past five years, there were a total of 6,000 cases of abuse involving children who tested positive for illegal drugs. A recent review of open child abuse cases in 16 southwest Iowa counties found that nearly half of the cases involved meth, Judge said. "I think most of us here ... have heard of at least one horrible example where the combination of drugs and child abuse turned deadly for a small child," she said.

Dr. Rizwan Shah, medical director of the hospital's Regional Child Protection Center, said Iowa is a leader in dealing with the issue, which can cause "major gaps in the child's emotional and mental health development down the road." "We are ahead of many other states' programs," she said.

Judge said the campaign was created because people often don't know how to react to a situation where they see a drug-endangered child, and the cases aren't reported. As part of the campaign, people can visit www.drugshurtkids.com to get tips on how to recognize children in danger. It includes a list of the signs of neglect and abandonment, exposure to drugs and accidental poisoning, and signs of physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

The Web site says if a person suspects there are drugs in a child's home, they should not approach the home, but write down everything they see and call police. If the child is in immediate danger, the campaign says to call 911. Iowans are also reminded they can call the Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center's Help Line at 800-242-411 to get tips on how to recognize a drug-endangered child or report abuse. "Drugs are dangerous, child abuse is intolerable. If you suspect illegal drug activity with innocent children present, report it immediately," Judge said. "Your intervention may very well save a child's life."

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The Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy and Partnership for Drug-Free Iowa commissioned the campaign, which was financed by a \$10,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, and a \$5,000 grant from Principal Financial Group (as reported in the [Sioux City Journal](#) on February 13, 2007).

Strawberry Meth Seized in Search

A new kind of methamphetamine that has a strawberry flavor and bright pink coloring was seized for the first time in Carson City during a search of a Como Street apartment on Saturday, an official said.

"(We are) concerned that this new type of meth will be more attractive to a younger crowd and may surface in schools," said Sgt. Darrin Sloan, commander of the Carson City Sheriff's Department's Special Enforcement Team. "Parents and teachers, please be aware of this new kind of drug that is making its way into our culture."

Sloan said SET officers served a search warrant on the home of Cesar "Thumper" Muñoz, 29, an alleged member of the Lima Street gang, after getting information that Muñoz was selling the flavored methamphetamine known in the Sacramento area and now Carson City as "strawberry quick."

Flavored methamphetamine is the newest metamorphosis of the dangerous street drug made from ephedrine and toxic chemical such as lye and battery acid. It appears that the flavor and color were added to the meth during the cooking process, instead of afterward, which would mean the drug does not have any less potency than its common counterpart. Methamphetamine can be ingested by snorting, smoking, or injecting.

Sloan said the "strawberry quick" methamphetamine is popular among new users who snort it because the flavoring can cut down on the taste. He said teenagers, who have been taught meth is bad, may see this flavored version as less harmful. "This is designed for the younger crowd. If (dealers) can get younger people using it, they can get long-time buyers," he said. "This stuff is new to us," Sloan said.

Muñoz allegedly sold 2 grams of "strawberry quick," in crystal form, to a SET informant. Sloan said no other drugs were found during a search of Muñoz's apartment. He was charged with sales, delivery and transport of a controlled substance, and remained in custody Sunday on a \$20,000 bail.

SET will continue to work undercover in an attempt to stem the sale and use of methamphetamine in Carson City, Sloan said. Since Jan. 1, 117.3 grams of methamphetamine and 28.3 grams of marijuana have been seized, and more than a dozen people have been arrested in similar SET operations.

Anyone with information on "strawberry quick" or methamphetamine sales or use is asked to call the Meth Hotline at 887-2020, ext. METH; or Sloan at 887-2020, ext. 3174 (as reported in the [Nevada Appeal](#) on January 29, 2007).

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NACo to Release Meth Issue Brief

The National Association of Counties (NACo) will release the first in a series of publications on meth focusing on the role of local law enforcement in addressing the methamphetamine problem. The publication will be available at NACo's Legislative Conference and will be available on NACo's website at that time. We will keep you updated when the publication is available.

RESOURCES

White County, GA Meth Task Force

The [White County, Ga. Meth Task Force](#) is a program of community partnerships such as families, neighbors, school personnel, law enforcement, county agencies, churches and municipalities to help develop a community mindset of zero tolerance for chemical use with a main focus on methamphetamine.

Montrose Methamphetamine Coalition

Montrose County, Colorado announced the creation of the [Montrose Methamphetamine Coalition](#), a joint effort by the county, city, law enforcement and social agencies that will address public safety, prevention, public awareness, treatment and drug-endangered children components of the meth problem.

Methamphetamine Power Point Presentations

The [KCI Anti-Meth Site](#) has collected and organized a series of PowerPoint presentations on many different angles of the methamphetamine issue and posted them on this site. The presentations are not endorsed or necessarily permissible for public use, you may contact the responsible party for permission.

STUDIES/REPORTS

National Drug Control Strategy, 2007

Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), February 2007

The [2007 National Drug Control Strategy](#) focuses on demand and supply reduction, highlights success in reducing meth use, and addresses the emerging prescription drug threat.

Scheduling and Regulation of Ephedrine and Pseudoephedrine Legislative Chart

National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws (NAMSDL), January 2007

This [resource](#) identifies state bills related to precursor chemicals and provides the specific restrictions and requirements

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associated with each bill.

Prenatal Exposure to Methamphetamine

Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project, Emory University, 2006

This [resource](#) provides research findings regarding the impact that prenatal meth use can have on the child.

Methamphetamine in Montana: A Preliminary Report on Trends and Impacts

Montana Department of Justice, January 2007

This [preliminary report](#) is an assessment of the status of the meth problem in Montana. It details some of the successes and obstacles of the Montana Meth Project in addressing the meth problem throughout the state.

SURVEYS

NACo's The Criminal Effect of Meth on Communities Survey Available

If you are interested in obtaining a hard copy of our July 2006 survey exploring the impact of meth use on local criminal justice systems and the communities they serve, we have a number of copies. To obtain the survey please just contact Justin Carmody at jcarmody@naco.org or (202) 942-4279 giving your address and number of copies you would like to receive.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Request for Applications (RFA): Drug-Free Communities Support Program

Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), February 14, 2007. ONDCP and SAMHSA announce the availability of funds for new [FY 2007 Drug-Free Communities Support Program \(DFC\) grants](#). Applications due: April 17, 2007.

EVENTS/TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

NACo's Legislative Conference

March 3-7, 2007 – Washington, DC

NACo will be holding "The Meth Epidemic: How it is Evolving and What Can Be Done" workshop at our Legislative Conference on Monday, March 5th from 9:00AM to 10:15AM in the International Ballroom East of the Hilton Washington & Towers Hotel. The

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workshop will focus on the current trends in the production and distribution of methamphetamine, NACo's comprehensive approach to fighting meth and what action is needed on the federal level to fight this insidious drug.

34th National Conference on Juvenile Justice

March 4-7, 2007 - San Diego, California

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges sponsors the [34th National Conference on Juvenile Justice](#). This conference will include information about community responses to methamphetamine.

SAPAA 2007 Spring Conference and Training Institute

March 20 – 21, 2007 – Little Rock, Arkansas

The [SAPAA 2007 Spring Conference and Training Institute](#) features information about methamphetamine awareness.

Oregon DEC Training Conference

March 20 – 21, 2007 – Pendleton, Oregon

The [Oregon DEC Training Conference](#) will focus on the harms associated with drug use and production environments.

The purpose of this monthly electronic newsletter is to provide county officials, administrators, criminal justice and mental health professionals, and other interested parties relevant information on the nation's methamphetamine problem. Information is gathered from many sources each month through a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. *If you have questions or comments regarding the content of this newsletter, please send a message to jcarmody@naco.org.*